

CHAPTER 5 – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/ PROJECT COORDINATION

Throughout the decision-making process for the proposed project, input from the public and other agencies provided direction and information to assist with corridor evaluation and selection. This chapter summarizes involvement of and coordination with the public and agencies. Appendix A provides copies of agency correspondence and project newsletters.

5.1 SCOPING

Scoping is held early in the project, and is open to both agencies and the public to define the range, or scope, of issues to be addressed during the different phases of a project. The primary intent of scoping was to solicit input from the appropriate agencies and public to guide ADOT in the selection of the preferred corridor, where more detailed alignment studies would be conducted. During the scoping period, ADOT announced the start of the Design Concept Report/EA process through various media, conducted agency coordination meetings, invited written comments, and held a public scoping meeting. Scoping meetings held for the proposed project also addressed the proposed extension of SR 303L from Happy Valley Road to 43rd Avenue; together these two projects constitute the link to I-17 from the current terminus of SR 303L at Happy Valley Parkway.

The comments solicited from both the public and agencies assisted ADOT in identifying issues associated with the development of more detailed alignment alternatives. Additional information on the scoping process and results may be found in the Final Scoping Report (URS 2003b), available upon request from ADOT.

5.1.1 Agency Scoping

Numerous opportunities for various agencies with an interest in the proposed project to provide input have occurred since the inception of the project. An agency kick-off meeting to discuss the purpose and need for the project and identify any concerns project staff should consider during the Road System Study was conducted in September 2002. Input received at this meeting was considered during the process and is summarized in Table 5-1. Table 5-2 is organized by alternative corridor and provides a summary of agency input received between September 2002 and April 2003. Key agency correspondence received throughout the project is provided in Appendix A.

Table 5-1
Summary of Agency Comments Received from Coordination Meeting, September 24, 2002

Agency	Comment
Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports Lone Mountain Road Corridor.
City of Glendale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports Lone Mountain Road as the preferred corridor. However, this location is a compromise between a more northerly alignment along the Carefree Highway and the originally more southerly alignments as approved by voters in 1985. If Carefree Highway is being addressed in this study, why is the original more southerly alignment not being considered?
Arizona State Land Department (ASLD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lone Mountain Road alignment represents ASLD's preferred corridor. The Lone Mountain/New River corridor also interests ASLD. While very costly, this would create another north/south route through northern Peoria, a transportation element that would be badly needed as Peoria grows and Lake Pleasant Parkway and El Mirage Road traffic volumes increase over time.
City of Phoenix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly supports Option 6, the New River Road extension, as it best reflects a design solution that is compatible with land uses identified in the Phoenix General Plan.
Arizona Game and Fish Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lone Mountain Road option would likely have the least impacts on wildlife resources.
Maricopa Association of Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approves the Lone Mountain Road alignment as the preferred option for the Loop 303 connection with I-17 in the next update of the Long Range Transportation Plan, to be constructed as a limited access parkway up to I-17 on the west side, with access only at major arterial intersections and for sufficient right-of-way to be purchased for a fully controlled access facility some time in the future. In addition, the New River Road alignment would be designated for further study in the Regional Transportation Plan.

Table 5-2
Summary of Agency Corridor Preferences

Corridor	Agency Comments
Carefree Highway Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. Bureau of Reclamation: The Carefree Highway Corridor meets the criteria of a “loop,” is the least intrusive on the environment and existing facilities, and would serve the need of a growing west Phoenix and newly expanded Peoria.
Lone Mountain Road Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department supports the Lone Mountain Road corridor. • City of Glendale supports Lone Mountain Road as the preferred corridor but views it as a compromise between the original corridor and the Carefree corridor. • Arizona State Land Department (ASLD): The Lone Mountain Road alignment is the preferred corridor. The Lone Mountain/New River corridor also interests ASLD. While very costly, the dual corridor would create another north/south route through northern Peoria, a transportation element that would be badly needed as Peoria grows and Lake Pleasant Parkway and El Mirage Road traffic volumes increase over time. • Arizona Game and Fish Department: The Lone Mountain Road option would likely have the least impacts on wildlife resources. • Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG): Approved the Lone Mountain Road corridor as the preferred option for the Loop 303 connection with I-17 for the next update of the Long Range Transportation Plan, to be constructed as a limited access parkway up to I-17 on the west side, with access only at major arterial intersections and for sufficient right-of-way to be purchased for a fully controlled access facility sometime in the future. In addition, the New River Road alignment would be designated for further study in the Regional Transportation Plan. • City of Peoria prefers the Lone Mountain Road corridor with a possible New River Spur per the MAG approved plan. Suggests the corridor go north of the mountain at the Lone Mountain Road and 67th Avenue alignment to reduce the impact through the New River Dam detention area. • City of Phoenix accepts the Lone Mountain Road corridor for an interim parkway and the New River Road corridor for the ultimate freeway, but the timing of construction of the ultimate freeway would be dependent on the pace of development in the northwest area. • City of Surprise supports the Lone Mountain Road corridor. • Maricopa County Department of Transportation supports Lone Mountain Road as the preferred corridor and, as a long-term option, the New River Road corridor to I-17 to improve the north-south movement.
Lone Mountain/New River Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Peoria (see above) • MAG (see above) • Phoenix (see above) • Arizona State Land Department (see above) • Maricopa County Department of Transportation (see above)
Carefree Highway/ New River Road Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None

5.1.2 Public Scoping

Concurrent with agency coordination, ADOT distributed a project newsletter (provided in Appendix A) and paid newspaper advertisements (Table 5-3) to notify the public of the project and upcoming public scoping meetings, and invite input regarding the project. The project newsletter was sent to a database, which was obtained through a Maricopa County Assessor's Office public records request and included property owners within a 30-square-mile area around the proposed project, in addition to other interested parties. ADOT has updated the mailing database throughout the project to include people who attended the meetings or requested project information.

Table 5-3 Public Notices for February 2003 Scoping Meeting	
Newspaper	Date Published
The Arizona Republic Community Sections 1, 2, and 3	Wednesday, February 12, 2003 and Saturday, February 15, 2003
The Peoria Times	Friday, February 14, 2003
The Desert Advocate	Wednesday, February 12, 2003
Canyon Country News	Wednesday, February 12, 2003

A public scoping meeting was held on Wednesday, February 19, 2003, at the Ben Avery Shooting Range Activity Center. Two copies of display boards were stationed around the meeting room for attendees to review. Representatives from ADOT and URS, the consultant assisting ADOT, were available to discuss the displays and answer questions. A total of 173 people attended this public scoping meeting. Input received at the public scoping meeting (February 2003) helped to determine the preferred corridors.

Comments and issues documented during the public scoping meeting varied. Project staff discussed questions or concerns about the project cost, whether the project fits the needs of the projected future growth in the area, and project compliance with federal funding guidelines.

The comments received during scoping primarily addressed preferences regarding the alternative corridors, scope of factors to be considered during the planning process, interconnections to other freeway routes, and environmental concerns. Table 5-4 provides a summary of comments received from the public during scoping.

Table 5-4
Summary of Public Scoping Comments
(Items may represent more than one comment on the same topic.)

Corridor	Comment
Carefree Highway Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would accommodate future populations. • Preserve Carefree Highway as a scenic corridor. • Meets the criteria of a “loop” and is least intrusive to the environment and existing facilities. It would also serve the growing west Phoenix and newly expanded Peoria areas. • Other options are too expensive because they would require building bridges and buying land. • Does not go through any residential areas. • Keep Carefree Highway open for Lake Pleasant traffic, especially on weekends and the flow of traffic north in the summertime separate. • Would provide a northern east-west corridor that would serve more of a needed function than just channeling more cars onto I-17.
Lone Mountain Road Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not want it on Lone Mountain Road. • It is part of the regional long-range transportation plan approved by MAG, the designated regional planning agency. • Closest to City of Phoenix. Seems to be able to provide easiest, best relief for I-17. • It is the closest to the City of Phoenix. It is now impossible to get from north Phoenix to, for example, Grand Avenue. The traffic on Bell Road is impossible. • If this road is to serve northern Phoenix, it must be built to the south. State Route (SR) 74 would be a freeway someday, so keep these roads far apart. • Carefree Highway currently has too many accidents at I-17, which causes the current congestion. • New River Road is too far north and would not be used as much because of this. Lone Mountain Road would help the congestion of the new subdivisions north of Happy Valley Road. • This route would provide the most immediate and efficient service for the orderly expansion of the urban area. • Greater service area. It is the closest to what was promised in 1985. It also provides the best relief to the lack of 1-mile arterial grids in the area. • It is the original proposed corridor and would complete the overall freeway system. • Has the least impact on current residents and environment. • It is the shortest, easiest, and least disruptive of the corridors being studied. • Provide quick access to Central Phoenix and Scottsdale from the far west side of town. • Don’t want to see additional traffic, noise, pollution from 4-lane highway. Carefree Highway considered a scenic corridor and would like to keep it that way! Since future mall planned for Lone Mountain Road and I-17, increased traffic would not have the impact as it would on Carefree Highway. • With proposed mall, makes sense to use Lone Mountain Road option. Carefree Highway to remain as scenic corridor, so that option would still direct additional traffic and development along Carefree Highway. • Seems best based on construction cost and function, as path would pass through mountains between Happy Valley Road and Carefree Highway, avoiding over-mountain construction.

Table 5-4
Summary of Public Scoping Comments
(Items may represent more than one comment on the same topic.)

Corridor	Comment
Lone Mountain/New River Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is part of the regional long-range transportation plan approved by MAG, the designated regional planning agency. • Carefree Highway relief. The New River Road exit makes good sense for the West Valley traffic. Lone Mountain Road makes good sense for development south of Carefree. • Provides a mid-point arterial between the 101 and the Carefree Highway. The New River Road extension would be a future added bonus to relieve pressure on I-17. • Provides capacity for east-west movement, and is compatible with planned land uses south of SR 74. • Give some relief to traffic on Bell Road. • Potential to access I-17 from three different locations, and to cross the northwest corridor. • Better serves Anthem and the West Valley and the potential growth in the area.
Carefree Highway/New River Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carefree Highway could be an alternate route and is already in existence. The New River Road freeway would help reduce the traffic on I-17. • Allows more traffic to exit sooner when traveling south of I-17 from Flagstaff, etc. It is an option for Anthem residents to completely avoid I-17. The two-pronged approach reduces noise to existing and future homes and businesses. Alternate access to Lake Pleasant and SR 74, which is often used to travel to Las Vegas and Laughlin. Also, Friday night backup of people going north would ease with west side travelers avoiding I-17. • It is further north. • Seems like a more natural route with existing Carefree Highway. • Furthest north to allow for more growth. Others are very close to Loop 101. • This option would offer the most obvious relief and show the highest impact from growth. • It would create an easier merge with I-17 if it connects further north. • Better for my needs. • This option would impact the fewest homeowners, and keeps the freeway far enough away from the homes being built. • Would funnel northbound traffic on I-17 north of Anthem. • You can double the use of SR 74.
Other factors to consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for expansion of additional lanes, and put as out of sight level as possible to preserve the views and limit noise. • Consistency with MAG plans. • Consider existing homes and their potential to decrease in value and enjoyment. • Access to northwest valley west of the proposed Loop 303 corridors. • Walls to block the freeway noise. • Speed up the process so it can be built sooner. • Build a wide median. Take a lesson from the east side of Loop 101. We do not need junk cable that a mini-car can drive though. Some states build concrete barriers with a median of 70 feet or less. A 100-foot median would virtually eliminate cross-median crashes. • Consider going east of I-17. Consider a route to Las Vegas, I-40, and Yavapai County.

Table 5-4
Summary of Public Scoping Comments
(Items may represent more than one comment on the same topic.)

Corridor	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strongest factor that needs to be taken into consideration is the true effect growth would have on traffic and congestion in this area. Between 25,000 and 30,000 new homes are being built in the northern Peoria corridor. • With the rapid population explosion in the entire West Valley, this freeway should be built as soon as possible. • Incremental widening should be part of the project beginning with a two-lane, but median-separated, road, then widened and adding interchanges as required. • We need another north/south route into Phoenix. I-17 south of Loop 101 would not be able to handle all of the traffic. When would you widen or build another north/south freeway from Loop 101 to I-10? • Select a freeway corridor that least affects homeowners, current and future. • It is not too early to be thinking about a Loop 303 segment east of I-17 that possibly hooks up to Loop 101 in the East Valley. • Get quick approval so the City of Peoria can update their Master Plan. • Make sure freeway is compatible with planned land uses and environmental constraints, including topography, drainage, and aesthetic appearance. • Impacts on arterial streets east of I-17, and to the rural lifestyle I enjoy currently. • Ways to get from Loop 303 to Loop 101 without everyone having to crowd onto I-17. • Plan for flooding during inclement weather. • Incorporate a High Occupancy Vehicle lane into the initial design. • Keep it as far away from the lakes as possible. • Preserve current bike and equestrian trails.
Additional comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go for it! • Do not support project or see need for another freeway. • How about just putting in the New River Road and not the other two options? Limit the number of interchanges. Lone Mountain Road does not have a road east of I-17, making it a bad choice. • The arterial system should still be built on the 1-mile grid. • It should tie into a route that extends east of I-17 for access to Cave Creek, then south to tie into the Squaw Peak Parkway and Loop 101. • Limit city expansion, mass congested development, homeowners associations, etc. Help homeowners protect the desert by limiting county restrictions on R43 properties, (i.e., stripped property is okay, but conservatives are hindered because of worthless restrictions). • Connecting to Lone Mountain Road and also near New River Road could be very beneficial. • During the staging process, a four-lane divided highway at grade would be used. If you adopt a “Michigan left turn” or directional crossovers for left turns, the need for signals would be reduced and those that are installed have fewer phases and traffic would move more smoothly. • If Loop 303 is extended to Happy Valley Parkway prior to this project, Happy Valley Parkway would be over-tasked? • Potential impact on the CAP Canal. It seems the road cuts way to the west, what about access to the 101?

Table 5-4
Summary of Public Scoping Comments
(Items may represent more than one comment on the same topic.)

Corridor	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I did not hear you refer to MAG plans (LRTP or RTP). You should refer to MAG plans and planning process at every Loop 303 meeting. • This was an excellent presentation by knowledgeable and friendly people. We need to pass the half-cent sales tax as soon as possible. • We would probably need all three of the proposed routes for Loop 303. The New River Road route is being considered because of not having to cross the river, channel the river, avoid environmental and wildlife concerns, or build bridges. Traffic can be interchanged with SR 74, and then bring it to the intersection with I-17. This would let trucks headed for Tolleson, Avondale, Buckeye, and California avoid using I-17 to reach I-10. It would also give people in the booming West Valley a better, safer and faster route to Flagstaff and other popular recreation areas to the north. • Appreciate the forward planning. Great idea to identify the corridor and acquire the right-of-way now. • Loop 303 should be planned as a loop, not a short segment as it was presented. • ADOT, MCDOT, and MAG need to coordinate and quit wasting public funds on pieces of the puzzle. • The silent majority is interested and appreciates your work. • Loop 303 does not help the majority of traffic, which travels north and south. • Build an elevated mass transit system, parallel to I-17. • Consider tolls for financial support. It is more equitable, encourages carpooling, and reduces traffic. • Consider a Park-&-Ride lot at I-17 and Lone Mountain Road.

5.2 INFORMATION MEETINGS

Information meetings were held at key points in the planning process to keep the public and other agencies updated on the current status of the proposed project. These information meetings were held in addition to the public scoping meetings, and provided another opportunity for the public and participating agencies to make comments on the proposed project.

5.2.1 Agency Meetings

With the completion of the Road System Study and the selection of a preferred corridor from Happy Valley Road to I-17, the need for agency input increased. Monthly agency coordination meetings have occurred since the public scoping meeting. Comments and input received at these meetings were documented and incorporated into the evaluation of various freeway alignment alternatives for each segment of the preferred corridors. Following the identification of preliminary alignments, agencies were asked to submit in writing their comments regarding the alignment alternatives. Overall, participating agencies supported the proposed project alignment. Written correspondence with agencies is included in Appendix A.

5.2.2 Public Meeting

The second Public Information Meeting for the proposed project was conducted on Wednesday, November 19, 2003, at the Sandra Day O'Connor High School cafeteria from 6:00 to 8:00 P.M. The meeting was a modified open house format, where meeting attendees could view project-related display boards before and after a formal slide show presentation. Meeting participants were offered several methods to provide their input. Attendees could ask questions in a formal question-and-answer session immediately following the presentation or one-on-one with project staff before and after the presentation, or submit a comment form that was available at the meeting.

Approximately 2,300 newsletters were mailed to notify the public of the information meeting. The mailing list consisted of previous meeting participants, property owners identified through the Maricopa County Assessor's office, and individuals and businesses that contacted project staff after the scoping meeting in February of 2003.

Public notices appeared in local newspapers; dates of publication are listed in Table 5-5.

Table 5-5 Public Notices for November 2003 Public Meeting	
Newspaper	Date Published
The Arizona Republic Community Sections 1, 2, and 3	Wednesday, November 12, 2003 and Saturday, November 15, 2003
The Peoria Times	Friday, November 14, 2003
The Desert Advocate	Wednesday, November 12, 2003

A total of 100 residents and agency representatives attended the meeting, including officials from the Cities of Phoenix, Peoria, and Glendale. Officials from MCDOT, MAG, ASLD, and Southwest Gas also were in attendance. Jim Small, a reporter from Pueblo Publishing (i.e., The Glendale Star and The Peoria Times) also attended the meeting.

The comments received during the meeting were primarily opinions about the Preferred Alternative alignment from Happy Valley Road to I-17 and general questions about other road improvements, the construction schedule, and the project's compatibility with planned land uses. A summary of comments specific to the proposed project evaluated in this DEA is compiled in Table 5-6.

Table 5-6 Summary of Public Comments on Preferred Alternative Alignment	
	Comment
43 rd Avenue to I-17 Preferred alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a written questionnaire, 10 respondents were in favor of this segment of the preferred alignment, and 2 were opposed. • Support the Preferred Alternative; on/off ramps from 43rd Avenue are necessary. • Support the Preferred Alternative; access is critical on a freeway eastbound to the Lone Mountain Road arterial east of I-17. • Avoid dumping traffic on an already busy and overloaded freeway; prefer moving farther out. • Prefer the Lone Mountain Road alignment to Segment 2 [west of 43rd Avenue]; fewer bridges would be needed and would be more direct.
Other comments received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to stop talking and start constructing! • Too close to the 101! New River Road corridor should be the best route to divert traffic from I-17. • What purpose does the 303 serve? It does not help traffic. • What group of people does the 303 help? Not the rest of the Valley. • If you are going to build it, build it as an outer city loop. • Please clarify where and how this project would affect 41st Avenue near New River Road. • What would be done to mitigate noise for adjacent property owners? • Thank you for circumnavigating Pleasant Valley Airport. Our customers and staff really appreciate it.

5.3 HEARING

A public hearing on the proposed project reviewed in this DEA would be conducted. A summary of agency and public comments received following distribution of this DEA, as well as ADOT responses, would be provided in the final environmental document.

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- _____. 2004b. Air Quality Impact Analysis: Proposed Estrella Freeway, SR 303L, Happy Valley Road to I-17. Prepared for the Arizona Department of Transportation, October.
- _____. 2004c. Alignment Selection Report: Proposed Estrella Freeway, SR 303L, Happy Valley Road to I-17. Prepared for the Arizona Department of Transportation, May.
- _____. 2004d. Biological Evaluation: Proposed Estrella Freeway, SR 303L, Happy Valley Road to I-17. Prepared for the Arizona Department of Transportation. October.
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